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ABSTRACT

At a December, 2000 shared leadership symposium 101 parent and community leaders engaged in structured discourse and debate about key issues related to family support and family and community strengthening. This document presents a consensus statement about key issues related to strengthening families and communities. The document includes information on the process used in planning and carrying out the symposium. The consensus statement asserts that it is necessary to shift the paradigm of support from "families in need of help" to families as the nurtured center of democracy and an asset to be supported. The consensus statement supports the premises and principles of family support practice, identifies responsibilities for families and communities, identifies essential family functions, and asserts that children, youth, and older persons should work together to build and support a common agenda. Included is a demand that barriers to seamless, accessible, and easy-to-understand help for any family or child be eliminated. The statement further calls for legislation requiring that federal laws and policies be formally assessed in terms of their effects on families, and maintains that data gathered about communities must be available to those communities and must ultimately come from and belong to them. The statement advocates development of an integrated, seamless, and holistic approach to services that works with families as well as individuals. The statement concludes with a call for immediate policy action in the areas of community building and economic self-sufficiency, healthy families, work and family, family resource and support centers, families and education, and families and immigration. Four appendices highlight points of tension among conference participants, issues and ideas for family support centers and funders, and desired legislative outcome, and include a list of symposium participants. (KB)

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Family Support America's Shared Leadership Series
Policy Consensus Paper 1

FROM MANY VOICES: *Consensus*

WHAT AMERICA NEEDS FOR STRONG FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

PS 031656

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Family Support America is grateful to the American Assembly for its support in developing a unifying process.

Family Support America
20 N. Wacker Drive • Suite 1100 • Chicago, IL 60606
312/338-0900 • 312/338-1522 (Fax)
www.familysupportamerica.org

About Family Support America

Family Support America promotes family support as the nationally recognized movement to strengthen and support families and places the principles of family support practice at the heart of every setting in which children and families are present.

Shared leadership and parent engagement tools include:

- *Guidelines for Family Support Practice, 2nd Edition*
- *How Are We Doing? A Program Self-Assessment Toolkit for the Family Support Field*
- *Learning to Be Partners: An Introductory Training Program for Family Support Staff*
- *Making Room at the Table: Fostering Family Involvement in Planning & Governance*
- *Putting Parent Engagement Into Action: A Practical Guide*
- *Every Voice Counts: Holding a Shared Leadership Event To Make Decisions Together*

To order these and other Family Support America publications, visit www.familysupportamerica.org or contact: Family Support America, 20 N. Wacker Drive, Ste. 1100, Chicago, IL 60606, 312/338-0900.

It's Family Support If It's...

- Building relationships based on equality and respect
- Improving families' ability to access resources they need
- Actively involving families in all aspects of the work
- Building on strengths to effect change
- Celebrating diversity and affirming cultural, racial, and linguistic identity
- Strengthening community
- Advocating for fair, responsive, and accountable systems

Introduction

Hailing from twenty-nine different states and the West Indies, one hundred and one parent and community leaders, family support practitioners, and government officials convened on December 3-5, 2000, in West Palm Beach, Florida. Their common purpose was to participate in a Family Support America–sponsored symposium, Shared Leadership: Forging a Consensus to Strengthen Families and Communities, and to engage in a structured discourse and debate about key issues related to family support and family and community strengthening. During the course of the symposium, the deliberations were recorded, processed, reviewed, and approved by participants. This document expresses the thought leaders' consensus regarding key issues in strengthening families and communities.

What Did Parent and Community Leaders Conclude?

There was agreement on many points, which are described throughout this document; points of tension were also noted and documented. But broadly speaking, they agreed that investments in families must be made and sustained universally in order to create, over time, healthy families and communities that provide security and support for all.

What Process Was Used?

The process of planning and carrying out the Shared Leadership symposium is summarized below and is described in detail in *Every Voice Counts: Holding a Shared Leadership Event To Make Decisions Together* (Family Support America, 2002).

Step 1: Outreach, Invitation, and Diversity

A national steering committee planned Shared Leadership: Forging a Consensus to Strengthen Families and Communities and compiled a list of invited participants, ensuring that all aspects of the symposium were fully inclusive and participatory. Those invited represented geographic, political, cultural, and racial diversity and many held opposing ideologies and viewpoints. Gender balance and full participation of mothers, fathers, men, and women was promoted. Parents involved represented a full socio-economic spectrum. Professional, working class, and impoverished parents and grandparents were well represented. The differences of opinion expressed during this symposium were expected to simulate the political limitations and opportunities for building policy in the real world.

Step 2: Creating Common Context

Each participant was provided with background documents that helped frame the discussion and raise key themes. Each participant received a binder prior to the symposium that contained the following materials:

a. Papers by Family Support America and The Financing Project on financing family support programs
b. A concise description of family support and its principles and relevance to national policy, including samples of current legislative definitions
c. State-by-state summaries of family support data
d. Existing definitions of family support and other relevant institutional statements
e. Statement on the American family developed using the American Assembly process
f. Research from National Parenting Association
g. Excerpts from various articles

Step 3: Structured Discourse and Facilitated Process

At the event, the 101 participants were split into four groups, ensuring cultural, racial, and ideological diversity and balanced parent representation in each group. For two and one-half days, the groups met for guided discussion that covered the following topics:

- How parents should be involved in program design and local program governance
- How communities should be involved in deciding what works best at the local level and driving decisions about program development
- Issues of flexibility in existing funding streams

- Issues related to new appropriations of federal funds
- Issues of state administration
- Results-based accountability and evaluation of efforts

Each area of discussion was framed with specific questions and presentations. Facilitators and parent leaders in each group facilitated the discussions. A professional recorder in each group summarized major points and captured the output.

Step 4: Creating the Policy Output/Agenda

Groups submitted their cumulative output to a panel of synthesizers/writers who produced a paper that was distributed to all participants for their review. On the final day of the symposium, all participants convened in a plenary session to share comments on the draft document, offer amendments, and make changes in language and emphasis. All changes were made immediately and tracked via written forms provided to participants, who returned the forms to the synthesizers/writers. The final document was reviewed by all participants and is available on-line and on paper by request.

What Did the Shared Leadership Symposium Achieve?

Shared Leadership: Forging a Consensus to Strengthen Families and Communities succeeded in creating, supporting, and sustaining a learning environment that nurtured the development of people's political capacities to engage in processes of social change. Equally important was its effect of increasing and supporting participants' capacities to recognize the importance of engaging families as participants in social change through a democratic consensus-building process.

The symposium produced the consensus statement reproduced in this document, which:

- Promotes and defines family support as a universally understood and well-defined state, local, and national activity, program, philosophy, and approach
- Spells out what communities and families need
- Creates a broad statement of the function of the family in society

The event also created a blueprint for how local, state, national, and international groups can replicate the process piloted at the symposium. That process is described in *Every Voice Counts: Holding a Shared Leadership Event To Make Decisions Together* (Family Support America, 2002).

Consensus STATEMENT

FAMILY SUPPORT America

Family Support America
20 N. Wacker Drive • Suite 1100 • Chicago, IL 60606
312/338-0900 • 312/338-1522 (Fax)
www.familysupportamerica.org

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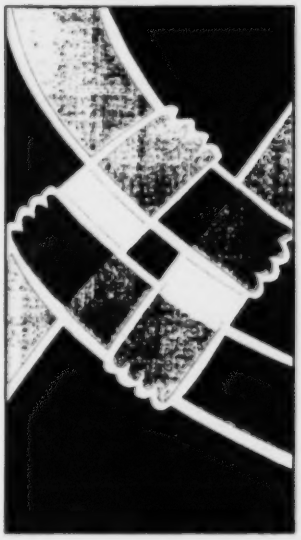
CONSENSUS STATEMENT

Preamble



✿ We, one hundred and one experienced parent leaders, family support practitioners, and government officials (city, county, state, and federal), met with the intention of forging a consensus on behalf of America's families and children in West Palm Beach, Florida, in December, 2000. All of us are members of families and parents, and half of us met the definition of parent leader adopted by the Family Support America Board of Directors in 1998. We all agree that:

✿ We believe that families, all families, are the nation's greatest asset, and that:

a. Policy in this nation at all levels must be built on a foundation of values that recognizes families and children as the essential unit of civic engagement and democracy.
b. Each family must be recognized and acknowledged as unique and individual.
c. All families have common human needs and require different levels of social investments at different times in the life span.
d. Investments made in families and children become assets in the development of strong citizens who participate in the larger good.
e. Children are the messengers sent into a future that we cannot imagine or see, and as such, they are our legacy and our full responsibility.
f. Each of us can make a contribution to the future generations of all children.

✿ We believe that America's increasing diversity can shape and be the foundation for a strong democracy. We believe that all public policies must promote every family's success by ensuring access to programs, services, and resources, regardless of race, language, ethnicity, immigration status,

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religion, gender, ability, income, political views, age, literacy, housing status, sexual orientation, education, and country of origin. We believe that the wealth, prosperity, and resources of this nation make it imperative that we shape and become a model for the world by paying attention to families and children and by knowing each to be deserving of resources that lead to individual and collective self-sufficiency and the overall strength of the world community. We believe that institutions and organizations must be held publicly accountable to the families and children whom they are to serve.

We believe that the wealth, prosperity, and resources of this nation make it imperative that we shape and become a model for the world by paying attention to families and children and by knowing each to be deserving of resources that lead to individual and collective self-sufficiency and the overall strength of the world community.

Family Support

✿ We believe that the principles of family support practice[1] reflect the basic non-partisan tenets of a government of the people, for the people, and by the people. Those principles are the operational extension and expression of the premises of family support. Therefore we affirm and agree that family support is and must be defined without ambiguity and included in all national legislation as an approach, philosophy, methodology, and assurance for the future. Family support, we all agree, is:[2]

a. **A set of beliefs** and an approach to strengthening and empowering families and communities so that they can foster the development of children, youth, and adult family members
b. **A type of grassroots, community-based program or center** designed to prevent family problems by strengthening parent-child relationships and providing whatever parents need in order to be good nurturers

[1] The principles and premises of family support practice are the result of Family Support America's multi-year Best Practices Project, in which the practices of thousands of family support providers nationwide were gathered, adopted by the Family Support America Board of Directors, and published in *Guidelines for Family Support Practice* (1996) Chicago, Illinois: Family Support America.

[2] Definitions formulated in consultation with family support providers and advocates nationwide and adopted by the Family Support America Board of Directors.

and providers. These programs are numerous and exist across the country and are funded through a variety of resources, mostly federal in origin.

c. **A shift in human services delivery and practice** that encourages public and private agencies to work together and to become more preventive, responsive, flexible, family-focused, strengths based, and holistic—and thus more able to achieve results
d. **A movement for social change** that urges all of us—policymakers, program providers, parents, employers, and others—to take full and complete individual and collective responsibility for improving the lives of children and families
e. **A national and statewide effort** to ensure that all children and families get what they need to be self-sufficient and to succeed

Premises and Principles of Family Support

✿ We believe in the premises of family support:

a. Primary responsibility for the development and well-being of children lies within the family, and all segments of society must support families as they rear their children.
b. Ensuring the well-being of all families is the cornerstone of a healthy society and requires universal access to support programs and services.
c. Children and families exist as a part of an ecological and reciprocal system.
d. Child-rearing patterns are influenced by parents' understandings of child development and of their children's unique characteristics, personal sense of competence, and cultural and community traditions and mores.

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e. Enabling families to build on their own strengths and capacities promotes the healthy development of children.
f. The developmental processes that make up parenthood and family life create needs that are unique at each stage in the life span.
g. Families are empowered when they have access to information and other resources and take action to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities.

✿ We affirm and believe that family support principles are in place in practice and in policy when:

a. Families and children are nurtured in relationships of respect and dignity.
b. A society enhances families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth, and children.
c. Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.
d. Programs of support affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multi-cultural society.
e. Programs of support are embedded in communities and workplaces and contribute to the community-building process.
f. Programs of support advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
g. Those who work with families mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development across the life span.
h. Programs of support for families are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
i. Principles of family support are modeled in all programs that work with, support, or provide services to families, including the planning, governance, and administration of these programs.

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Continuum of Responsibilities

✿ We believe that families must fully participate as leaders and guides, whereas:

a. It is the responsibility of communities to help families succeed.
b. It is the responsibility of families to help the community succeed.
c. It is the responsibility of state and national government to help communities help families succeed.
d. It is our responsibility as citizens to shape state and national government and policy through civic action.
e. We are the community.
f. We must create a collective identity among parents based on common concerns, dreams, and understanding.
g. We must shift the paradigm of support from "families in need of help" to families as the nurtured center of democracy and an asset to be supported; families are the fundamental building block from which life moves outward into the large mainstream.
h. This paradigm shift begins with us as we move parenting from a private to a collective concern around which we are willing to redesign systems, make personal sacrifices, and contribute time and talent as citizens.
i. Public policy must be driven by parents collectively, for parents know what they, their children, and their intergenerational family members face.
j. Public policy that is driven by us will result in comprehensive services that are easy to access and understand, grounded in respect and equality, and available to all, so that each family may reach its full potential and, in turn, society will reach its full potential.

It is the responsibility of communities to help families succeed. It is the responsibility of families to help the community succeed.

We must shift the paradigm of support from "families in need of help" to families as the nurtured center of democracy and an asset to be supported; families are the fundamental building block from which life moves outward into the large mainstream.

Essential Functions of the Family

✿ We believe that no provider, system, state agency, or local effort can protect, make safe, or adequately nurture

children. The family is the essential provider of safety, security, and a future for children and as such must be supported by society and its chosen policymakers and institution builders. The family has essential functions:

a. Maintaining the physical health and safety of members by providing for shelter, food, clothing, health, and economic sustenance
b. Providing for the health and well-being of children at all stages
c. Providing for the health and well-being of adults at all stages
d. Providing ongoing nurturing relationships, motivation, and self-esteem within a context of love and security
e. Teaching social skills and critical thinking and promoting life-long learning and education
f. Providing and transmitting values, spiritual context, and culture
g. Creating a place for recreation and recuperation from external stress
h. Providing for the vitality and quality of our communities
i. Helping to shape a belief system from which goals and values are derived
j. Encouraging shared responsibility for the family, community, and larger society

The family is the essential provider of safety, security, and a future for children and as such must be supported by society and its chosen policymakers and institution builders.

✿ The more fully the family functions, the better the democracy and the quality of civic engagement that undergirds democracy. We define family broadly as a group of people who take responsibility for each other's well-being: parents, children, grandparents, partners, siblings, aunts, uncles, and kin. All members should be able to access support and advocate for the family. Each family is different,

The more fully the family functions, the better the democracy and the quality of civic engagement that undergirds democracy.

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and defining "family" is up to the family itself.[3] Each community is different, and defining the community is up to the community itself.

✿ We believe that family members of all ages require internal and external supports in order to survive.

A Call to Action

✿ Overarching the values of a democracy, strong economy, healthy society, and vital community is our common belief that the family, broadly and inclusively defined, is the essential central structure. Therefore, resources and supports must be available for all families, through flexible, barrier-free policies, funding, and financing. Creative use of all resources and assets at the local level begins with the involvement, engagement, and leadership of parents, families, and children themselves. There are many programs, run by states, community-based organizations or both, that are complex and difficult to identify, navigate, and access. We must tackle, together, the arduous task of ensuring the health and well-being of our fellow citizens and their families. We must require that services be easy to access, easy to understand, and comprehensive.

Overarching the values of a democracy, strong economy, healthy society, and vital community is our common belief that the family, broadly and inclusively defined, is the essential central structure.

✿ While we believe that the stimulation, nurturing, and support of young children from pre-birth to early childhood are imperative; we are certain that support for families begins before birth and continues through late childhood and adolescence and into all stages of adulthood. Therefore, our call for action includes the demand that we recognize the diverse and varied nature of human life in this nation. We demand the elimination of barriers to seamless, accessible, and easy-to-understand help for any family or child, as needed, when needed. We must act to find a central and collective strategy

We demand the elimination of barriers to seamless, accessible, and easy-to-understand help for any family or child, as needed, when needed. We must act to find a central and collective strategy which ensures that we all understand that the future is our responsibility.

[3] There was some tension noted among participants regarding the definition of family. At least one participant felt strongly that an individual should be considered a family. However, the group maintained the broad definition.

which ensures that we all understand that the future is our responsibility.

✿ Therefore, we envision and call out for an America in which:

a. All children, youth, and families can get what they need, when they need it, to be strong and healthy, right in their own neighborhoods and communities
b. All communities reinforce the efforts of families to raise responsible, productive, confident, thriving children; neighbors watch out for one another across racial, ethnic, religious, and economic lines; and diversity is a cause for appreciation, not discrimination
c. All institutions that serve children and families work together for the common good, listen to the families they serve and involve them in making decisions, and not only embrace family support principles but put them into practice[4]

Acting as Parents and Family Members

✿ For each of us, the role of parent or family member must be a priority role, one that gives us common ground and mutual understanding across the larger society. We must each act, as family members and parents, on an understanding of the intergenerational imperative (see sidebar, next page), in all walks of life, by making the raising of healthy and productive children in America the focus of our political expression. We must vote, engage with government, and engage with each other to forge and utilize a powerful and united political identity.[5]

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[4] From the Family Support America Strategic Plan, approved by the board of directors in 1995, 1997, and 2000.

[5] In her paper "Taking Parenting Public," Ruth Wooden, president of Public Agenda, notes that more than one-third of parents identify being a parent as a primary identity when voting. She also cites research that indicates that there is unity regarding issues and policies among parents, cutting across the usual divides of gender, race, income, religion, and party.

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The Intergenerational Imperative*

Advocates for children, youth, and older persons must work together to build and support a common agenda. Each generation has unique strengths to help meet the needs of another. Efforts to create more decent societies rest on the interdependence of generations—past, living, and still to come. Further:

- Intergenerational collaboration will unite and improve our communities.
- Every person, younger and older, is a resource and adds value.
- Public policy should meet the needs of all generations.
- Resources are more widely used when they connect the generations rather than separate them.
- Discrimination in any form limits a person's potential to contribute to the development of his or her community.

*From Generations United (2000) "Core Beliefs."

✿ Our call for action requires that we initiate and continue a national conversation and carry out a plan of action that guarantees strong supports for parents and family members in balancing work, civic, and family lives—for in order to balance our individual and collective attention to work, society, and family requires that we shift the way we currently live, consume, and work. We must become a voluntary movement of parents who insist that parenting become the highest priority on the public agenda. Therefore, we believe that we must take action in the following ways:

a. We call for a new civic collaboration that works for all parents.
b. Together, we must generate support for all parents and families; families must work for families as a voting bloc, national political movement, and demanding citizenry.
c. Together, we can improve the image of and the messages about families, parents—fathers and mothers—and children across all classes, genders, and ethnic identities.

Together, we can change the image of and the messages about families, parents—fathers and mothers—and children across all classes, genders, and ethnic backgrounds.

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d. We must clearly show that meeting the needs of parents results in a positive return for the community.

✿ Therefore, family and parent leaders are needed and must fully participate as partners in systems of family, faith, community, learning, and governance.

Creating and Stimulating Policy

✿ We agree that policies and programs that are supportive of and create a foundation for future generations are needed now; such policies are a good investment. Formal and informal resources for families should be available and accessible, and all public organizations and institutions should treat families and children with dignity and respect.

✿ We believe that legislation should be passed that requires federal laws and policies to be formally reviewed and assessed in terms of their intended and unintended effects on families.

✿ A formal process for such assessment or an impact statement must be prepared and made available for wide public commentary prior to the passage of or promulgation of any federal law or policy. We believe this statement to be of fundamental importance to all policy statements contained in this document.

✿ We define policy as any combination of laws, administrative regulations, policy guidance, financing plans, or legal structures, and believe that all policy should lead to the implementation of family support principles and practices at the neighborhood, local, county, state, national, or international level.

We define policy as any combination of laws, administrative regulations, policy guidance, financing plans, or legal structures, and believe that all policy should lead to the implementation of family support principles and practices at the neighborhood, local, county, state, national, or international level.

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✿ We agree that authentic community, parent, and family leadership selected by the community must be represented in state and local policy-making and decision-making structures. Decisions must reflect in real and formal ways the involvement of those who are affected by the respective program or initiative. Resources resulting from any policy must be allocated and appropriated to support and develop parent and family leadership, as such leadership is essential to the integrity of the law or policy or its program of implementation.

✿ We believe that all agencies in charge of accrediting family-serving groups and organizations (including the Council on Accreditation, the Council on Social Work Education, and others) should adopt family support principles and practices and adequately reflect and measure them in their accreditation criteria and reviews. We must ensure that family support principles and practices are integrated into the professional education, credentialing, and licensing of physicians, social workers, teachers, and other professionals. Training on family support principles and practices must be made available to those who work at all levels of legislatures, teaching institutions, the faith community, and other institutions.

✿ We believe that **all** policies that impact children and families must:

a. Include parent and family involvement in their development
b. Provide and maintain training for families as leaders
c. Ensure that families, parents, and community members are involved in planning services
d. Create opportunities for parents to participate that take into account the realities of parents' schedules, needs, and abilities
e. Make funding and support—such as childcare, transportation, and paid time off—available to encourage parent engagement in local decision making
f. Create opportunities for parent engagement and leadership in the context of culture

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Measuring Strengths-Based Work Locally

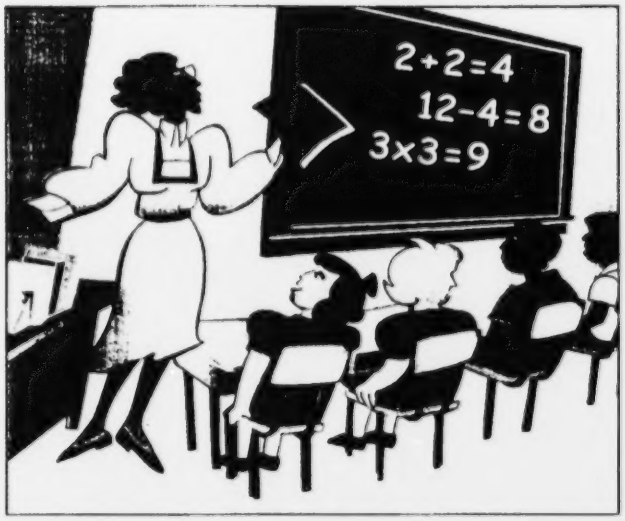
✿ Family support principles require a shift from a deficit model to a strengths- and asset-based model. Progress and growth must be assessed using promotional indicators that measure when strength is growing. Parents must be a part of the evaluation process, using participatory models of gathering data and establishing indicators. Data gathered about communities must be available to communities and must ultimately come from and belong to those communities. Communities must develop and promote indicators of family strengthening and success and then measure progress toward those indicators over time. Family support is more than preventative; it is promotional. For example, studies that show that children do better in school when parents read to them can result in work at the neighborhood level to promote parent-child reading, which lead to the desired outcome. In a partnership model, the indicators become the property of the families themselves.

Data gathered about communities must be available to communities and must ultimately come from and belong to those communities.

✿ Therefore, we believe:

a. Family support calls for new ways of measuring success and strengths.
b. Promotion is powerful in creating results that are positive.
c. Shared accountability promotes social and civic engagement.
d. Participatory research gives ownership to those who ultimately create the outcome.
e. Promotional indicators are effective in measuring the success of ecological and cross-disciplinary systems of care that have both formal and informal components.
f. Data and research must be shared with those on whom they have impact.
g. Systems must be accountable to communities and their members.

New Financing Strategies in Policy & Systems Reform



✿ We hereby set forth clearly that we call for the replacement of a fragmented, categorical, and uncoordinated array of services at all levels (which work on a piecemeal basis with individual family members) with an integrated, seamless, and holistic approach that works with the family as well as the individual. Our current systems of federal, state, and local funding streams have been established to respond directly to the emerging needs of categories of children and families that are frequently narrowly defined. Categorical programs come with strict eligibility requirements, a "one-size-fits-all" approach, defined allowable services, specified criteria for provider participation, and strict reporting requirements. Over time, a morass of funding streams to meet the varying and changing needs of children and families has developed. The systems of care have been likened to silos, which are not connected or coordinated. The end result is that families must search numerous programs until they find and receive what is necessary to help and aid their children and family members. Many families have neither time nor transportation and cannot navigate systems of care that are difficult and have differing requirements.

Categorical programs come with strict eligibility requirements, a "one-size-fits-all" approach, defined allowable services, specified criteria for provider participation, and strict reporting requirements.

✿ Therefore, we call for and insist on the design of systems of financing that:

a. Create flexible funding streams which can be used in customized, tailored, and individualized ways
b. Emphasize immediately accessible, local delivery systems that work together
c. Are based on the real, actual needs of families who

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are struggling in a web of circumstances and factors which defy categorization
d. Allow for strength-based approaches that involve parents and family members
e. Make dollars available for flexible local use
f. Streamline accounting and fiscal rules and create more flexible internal structures for financing
g. Require that public (state and local) funding for local programs be contingent upon local decision making and parental involvement
h. Increase public-private partnerships
i. Draw on family and neighborhood formal and informal systems of support
j. Allow all families to get help when it is needed
k. Demand cooperative collaboration across all systems: substance abuse, health, safety, justice, transportation, child welfare, childcare, mental health, education, and human services
l. Are designed to protect and serve the most vulnerable
m. Support asset-based, strengthening, promotional, and healthy strategies as well as those designed for intervention and amelioration of problems
n. Encourage results-based, blended, pooled, de-categorized, or flexible methods of financing which can be studied
o. Reward programs and collaborations which get results

Summary

✿ For purposes of consensus, we call for policy action now in the areas of:

a. Community building and economic self-sufficiency
b. Healthy families
c. Work and family
d. Family resource and support centers
e. Families and education
f. Families and immigration

*Areas of Policy Action**

Community Building and Economic Self-Sufficiency

✿ We believe that all families require capacity and resources, and especially support effective policy that ensures essential resources for families in particularly difficult circumstances. If communities are to succeed in the alleviation of poverty, generous, sustained, supportive resources and policies are necessary. The alleviation of poverty is good business for America. Having set forth some universal fundamental definitions and agreements, we call for public policy that (1) recognizes that families need communities which can generate wealth and (2) encourages reinvestment by community members and others. When parents and caregivers have jobs and skills, they can meet the needs of their families. All families require resources to meet those needs. Economic justice calls for wages that provide for basic needs and are based on the actual and realistic costs of stabilizing, housing, clothing, feeding, and educating a family. Economic self-sufficiency will result from family stability and equity.

✿ We want public policy that promotes economic justice through wages, universal employment policies, taxes, fiscal incentives, and equitable access to capital. Therefore, we believe that communities must create and promote jobs that provide benefits, help people manage the lifetime career of parenting, and supplement the natural and personal resources in the community. We will not allow children to fail because of poverty and hunger.

✿ Community development and community building embrace the concepts of family support and blend economic,

We believe that all families require capacity and resources, and especially support effective policy that ensures essential resources for families in particularly difficult circumstances.

* This list of areas is neither complete nor comprehensive. Listed here are only the areas (1) in which there was significant discussion, (2) on which consensus was drafted during the symposium, and (3) that were considered to be the top legislative priority areas. As more areas are developed, they can be added to this document through further work and shared leadership.

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physical, and social environments into a whole effort. More and more collaborative and mutual assistance efforts are becoming family-centered and family-based in their structure and focus. A lack of the resources needed to meet any of the essential requirements for survival diminishes the family's ability to carry out its mission. Inadequate income substantially diminishes a family's likelihood of getting necessary health care, good housing, adequate education, and other opportunities. The resulting tension creates instability and desperation and decreases the family's ability to maintain an environment conducive to development.

✿ We believe that enhancing families' ability to become economically self-sufficient is critical to public policy and individual action. Economic empowerment occurs when there is a commitment to identifying and supporting individual, family, and community strengths. People working together to address their priorities can build better communities and systems.

✿ We want all families to become educated, highly skilled producers of capital and believe that those who are leaving the welfare rolls to become workers must have adequate supports for themselves and their children. Therefore, we are agreed that provisions in legislation that limit supports and services to families based on criminal history, documentation status, or eligibility must be replaced, if Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is reauthorized, by policies that are in keeping with the principles and premises of family support and community building.

✿ We call out for all families to have adequate health care as they enter the workforce, knowing that entry-level jobs often do not provide benefits and training. We also urge legislatures and legislators to be realistic; removing people from the welfare rolls is not an end in and of itself. If these families have no supports or resources and are earning extremely low wages, they are no longer part of America's future; they become a hidden and ever-present population that cannot survive in a wealthy, consumer-based society.

Parent engagement can begin with as simple a contribution as taking a casserole to a neighbor. It can go on to becoming a community leader, running for city council... there is no limit. Every point on the continuum matters.

—Parent leader at Family Support America meeting

If families leaving the welfare rolls have no supports or resources and are making extremely low wages, they are not a part of America's future; they become a hidden and ever-present population which can not survive in a wealthy, consumer-based society.

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Families who are working need childcare, health care, and services. In particular, they need vocational training and additional education. Family support programs can be of assistance in stabilizing families who are leaving the welfare rolls by providing individuals with formal and informal training and helping them prepare for job interviews, job success, and additional training.

✿ We urge policymakers to understand that poverty and lack of economic self-sufficiency spill over to impact employers and consumers negatively. For a family, the best antidote to poverty and the best way to create a positive impact on the economy is a job that provides adequate wages and benefits. Families who lost support under the 1996 welfare reform legislation need safety nets that ensure that the children will have food, health care, housing, and clothing while the parents and other adults advance in the labor market. We urge policymakers to understand the impact of TANF and to adjust it to supply adequate supports for families so that they may be successful in the workforce.

Therefore ...

✿ Family economic policies must give top priority to families with the greatest economic needs, those with the greatest social needs, and those most vulnerable to breakdown. The challenge for the future is to create new public policies that promote the common economic good through the practice of the principles of community building, which are in alignment with the principles of family support. We affirm and call for the principles of community building to be used in the development of policies and in research and evaluation. Policies for community building must, at a minimum, perform all of the following:[6]

[6] Angela Glover Blackwell, J.D., and Raymond Colmenar, M.P.P. (2000) "Community-building: From local wisdom to public policy." In *Public Health Reports* 115.

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a. Build public will
b. Expand resources and engage more partners
c. Enhance community power by increasing the level of civic engagement and networking among community-builders and organizations
d. Invest in participatory models of policy analysis, advocacy, research, and communication
e. Stimulate the recognition and full expression of local leaders who are national leaders

✿ We believe that all family policy must be designed comprehensively to:

a. Strengthen communities holistically and support all aspects of community living, including economic opportunity, affordable housing, safety and security, parenting, youth development, transportation and utility industries, health care, early childhood services, and education, rather than target individual pieces of the community puzzle.
b. Build local capacity for solving problems and building relationships between communities and institutions providing resources. Policies should encourage organizational development and create links and partnerships between community organizations and other institutions. They should recognize the value of community assets, strengthen those assets, and invest in more of those assets.
c. Foster community participation in policy development and implementation. This can be done through community planning, alternative governance structures, and new financing methods that allow local authorities and even neighborhoods to have a say in the deployment of resources.
d. Deal explicitly with issues of race and ethnicity and their role in creating social and economic deprivation. The face of poverty remains most disproportionately African American, in absolute terms, with Latina(o) and Native American families also over-represented.

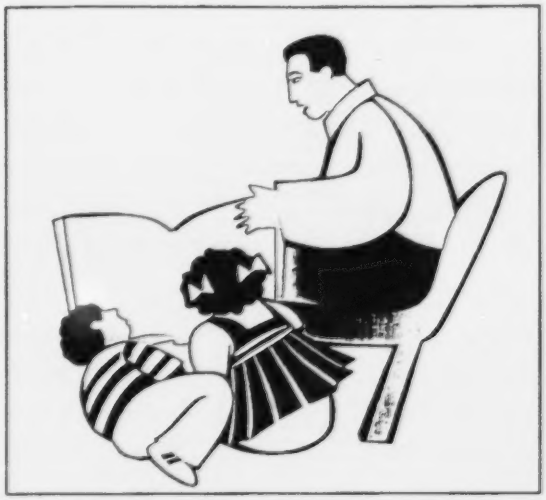
Family policy must be designed comprehensively to strengthen communities holistically and support all aspects of community living, including economic opportunity, affordable housing, safety and security, youth development, transportation and utility industries, health care, early childhood services, and education, rather than target individual pieces of the community puzzle.

Family policy must be designed comprehensively to deal explicitly with issues of race and ethnicity and their role in creating social and economic deprivation.

Community-building efforts seek to level the playing field and create equitable outcomes for all groups.

e. Ameliorate the isolation of poor communities. Community improvement should be viewed in the context of the broader region. Neighborhoods must be linked as part of the larger context of regional development.

f. Tailor programs to local conditions. The most effective solutions to local problems come from within the community itself, and steps must be taken to engage communities in local problem solving that leads to engagement in the larger community, society, and nation.



g. Build accountability mechanisms so that efforts are tied to community standards. This enables communities to maintain improvements and monitor the progress they are making toward achieving a better quality of life.

✿ If community-building principles are fully embraced, policy making itself becomes a community-building process because community residents are involved in every step, from framing the issues to interpreting the data and discussing policy responses.[7]

Healthy Families

✿ Children and families need access to health care that is family-centered, comprehensive, coordinated, continuous, culturally effective, and compassionate. All health care providers must be held to the highest standards of family support and comprehensive service. Strong professional medical and health constituencies will strengthen the

Strong professional medical and health constituencies will strengthen the potentially unprecedented involvement of families in America and its future.

[7] Angela Glover Blackwell, J.D., and Raymond Colmenar, M.P.P. (2000) "Community-building: From local wisdom to public policy." In *Public Health Reports* 115. 163.

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potentially unprecedented involvement of families in America and its future.[8]

✿ We believe that no family or child should be denied health care because of poverty, race, ethnicity, ability, documentation, country of origin, or immigration status. In a nation of vast resources, the health of all children must become the responsibility of each of us, and this idea must be expressed through public policies. Health policies must reflect all that we know about the care of children as they develop from conception to adulthood. We believe that healthy communities are free of legal and illegal substance abuse and promote good nutrition and lifestyles, including adequate time for civic involvement, recreation, and family life. Balance is essential to health, and we believe that families are now negatively affected by time shortage and increasingly long hours of work.

✿ Child development research over many years has helped us understand what children require for healthy development. To become productive, contributing adults, children need to live in environments that meet their basic physical and health-related needs. Local and state policymakers are recognizing the failure of bureaucratic, categorical, impersonal systems and are endorsing new ways of functioning that allow citizens to participate in community health planning.

Local and state policy makers are recognizing the failure of bureaucratic, categorical, impersonal systems and are endorsing new ways of functioning that allow citizens to participate in community health planning.

✿ We also believe that communities and families can develop indicators and assets that, when promoted, create the foundation from which youth can emerge successfully. All families need health care. We can not withhold health care from citizens in a wealthy and advanced society.

[8] Sharon Taba, Project Director, Malama Pono, Hawaii Medical Association.

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✿ Based on our understanding of the interrelationship of children, families, communities, and the larger society, we must ensure that there is adequate prenatal care for all children. Following birth, families need community programs that offer guidance, answer questions, make referrals to other resources, and connect parents to the community. We believe that health, promotion of wellness, and prevention of illness for all individuals belong at the center of.healthy, family-supportive communities.

Therefore ...

✿ We believe that family-centered and supportive policies demand that:

a. Health care be available to all children
b. Services for children and adults with disabilities or physical challenges be available, easy to navigate, and inclusive of durable medical equipment
c. Health care and community health care providers partner to promote wellness, and that health care and prevention programs be universally available to all
d. Health insurance and health care opportunities cover same-sex partners, long-term significant others, and dependents in self-identifying family units
e. Support for health and health care exist throughout the life span and be equitably available to family members of all ages and stages
f. Family support principles be part of all training, regulation, and policy in health care
g. Every child and family in poverty have a medical home consisting of a physician and health care providers who ensure that the care received by individuals is consistent and is provided by those who know the family and are aware of its needs
h. Health be seen as an investment in the future of America and adequate resources for substance abuse treatment, mental health care, after-care and community support be developed in all states

We believe that health, promotion of wellness, and prevention of illness belong at the center of healthy, family-supportive communities.

i. A continuum of care be in place to take behavioral health[9] patients from the point of entry into treatment and intervention to final self-sufficiency in the community. Chronic substance abusers may require intensive intervention, post-treatment programming and vocational training, and after-care support.

j. All communities be kept safe from environmental hazards.

Work and Family

✿ We believe that employers are key stakeholders in the success of American families and communities. The prosperity of the American family and the prosperity of American businesses are mutually beneficial; strengthening families and communities creates a stable marketplace that helps to foster a thriving economy.

✿ We believe that family members can work successfully and contribute to the community and nation through employment. We call for workplace policies and laws that allow parents and care-givers to be nurturing parents and family members while working. We call for work-life policies that work across the life span and throughout the life cycle and allow flexibility in both time and place of work. We believe that employers must work in reciprocity with

The prosperity of the American family and the prosperity of American businesses are mutually beneficial; strengthening families and communities creates a stable marketplace that helps to foster a thriving economy.

[9] The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation defines behavioral health as "non-medical care factors that influence a person's health, such as choices about smoking, diet, sexual behavior, and physical activity, as well as environmental exposures and other factors." For more information, see McGinnis, J. and E. Schroeder (2001) "Expanding the Focus of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Health as an Equal Partner to Health Care," in *To Improve Health and Health Care, 2001* (Princeton, N.J.: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation). Available on-line at www.rwjf.org.

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employees to contribute to the larger good of society through the family.

Therefore ...

✿ We strongly believe that employees will be able to navigate their work and their family life most successfully when:

a. Affordable, high-quality childcare is universally available and provided in a culturally appropriate context
b. Publicly funded education and care are available for children from birth through age 18, and older children have access to affordable vocational training and higher education
c. Programming is available for children and youth on holidays and after school
d. Vacation periods, school breaks, and work and school hours are nationally aligned with the provision of services and supports to families
e. Affordable medical, dental, life, and disability insurance and retirement plans are equally available to all employees, including part-time workers, small business employees and service industry employees
f. Leave and time off for birth, adoption, and personal and family illness are available to all employees, including part-time workers, small business employees, and service industry employees and funding during leave and time off is sufficient to make them available to lower-income employees
g. Community-based family support centers are available to employees to help them meet their families' needs. These centers provide services and programs that respond to community needs; these include but are not limited to: parenting classes; child development activities, parent-to-parent support groups and mentoring; parent-and-child activities; resources and referral to community services; domestic violence support; life-skills support with regard to financial management, nutrition, stress reduction, and other skills; and English as a Second Language classes.

We strongly believe that employees will be able to navigate their work and their family life most successfully when community-based family support centers are available to employees to help them meet their families' needs.

Family Resource and Support Centers

✿ We believe that family resource and support centers are an essential component of building the social fabric of a healthy community. They contribute directly to the increase of social capital[10] and cohesion and the reduction of social isolation. These centers are places in the community to which families turn for help and are places where they gather, share knowledge and experience, contribute to their communities, and develop their resources and systems of support. Family resource and support centers produce positive outcomes across generations and improve the quality of life in the communities in which they are located.

✿ We believe that family resource and support centers can reach and engage "hard-to-reach," socially vulnerable families. They can produce growth in a variety of dimensions of family and child well-being and have impact on two or more generations. The more comprehensive and intensive the family resource or support center is, and the more continuously it is involved with the family, the more likely there is to be clear evidence of durable program impact. Programs that are truly integrated into their neighborhoods can affect not only individual families, but the whole neighborhood and its social capital and cohesion. We believe that programs that stress family involvement in community life and activities provide participants with a needed avenue for developing skills in leadership and advocacy, and that these skills strengthen the neighborhood's capacity for self-governance and widespread participation in community governing and decision-making systems.

The more comprehensive and intensive the family resource or support center is, and the more continuously it is involved with the family, the more likely there is to be clear evidence of durable program impact.

[10] The World Bank defines social capital as "the norms and social relations embedded in the social structures of societies that enable people to coordinate action to achieve desired goals"(www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/).

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✿ Family resource and support centers stress family engagement and leadership, ensuring that families participate in making decisions about services and how they are delivered. This provides a base upon which family members build leadership, advocacy, and community-building skills.

Therefore ...

✿ We call for:

a. Sustained and substantial funding to support family resource and support centers across the nation and ensure their vitality
b. Provision for the development of family resource and support centers, whether they are free-standing programs or are part of other child- and family-serving organizations, hospitals, libraries, childcare programs, or schools
c. The availability of family resource and support programs to all families, because all families can benefit from support
d. Family resource and support centers to be funded adequately and fully, so that a range of services can be provided across a full week of daytime and evening hours in response to the needs of the community

Families and Education

1. Schools

✿ We believe that while schools have as their primary mission the education of children, they are also part of a larger community. With appropriate resources, schools can be hubs of services and support for families and can engage families in new ways. We believe that all schools and all school personnel need to accept and act on the belief that families are the first teachers of their children. Families and schools must be partners in nurturing and teaching children.

Schools can be hubs of services and support for families and can engage families in new ways.

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✿ We note that there is a growing movement of community schools that serve as family resource centers. We acknowledge the many ways in which resources are provided by schools to the larger community of parents and family members. There are growing numbers of communities in which parents are calling for community-based schools. There are growing numbers of model schools across the country that are demonstrating the power of a school to help its community members succeed.

Therefore ...

✿ We ask for and call out for policy which encourages and strengthens schools and rewards them for entering into community life; schools do this by:

a. Becoming partners with parents in nurturing and educating children
b. Modeling school-community partnerships that integrate resources to maximize the opportunities available to families
c. Making district boundaries consistent with other governmental and civic boundaries so that consistent data can be collected in all systems of care
d. Expanding their hours and adapting their calendars to support the realities of work and family life
e. Making their space available to meet community needs 24 hours a day and seven days a week
f. Incorporating family resource and support centers or becoming family resource and support schools
g. Becoming partners with families and practicing family support principles
h. Encouraging parent leadership in the life of the school and its work in the community
i. Viewing parents as children's first teachers and as life-long learners who are to be encouraged by the school

Policy should encourage schools to enter into community life by viewing parents as children's first and best teachers and as life-long learners who are to be encouraged by the school.

✿ Furthermore, we believe that all schools must have adequate technology to meet the needs of the children and the community and that community residents must have access

to information technology in schools, libraries, family support centers, and other public facilities.

2. Post-Secondary Education

✿ We believe that we must ensure that all people have access to post-secondary education. We call for action and policy to:

a. Increase access to vocational training for all
b. Increase the status of vocational education as legitimate and valuable career-focused training for those who wish to pursue it
c. Promote parity in education for all

Families and Immigration

✿ We strongly agree and call for new policy regarding immigration in this nation. Services should be provided to families and children who need them regardless of their documentation status. The wealth of our nation precludes a system of punitive policies that deny access to services and education for those who are not documented. Many families are affected by issues of documentation due to geography, and children are the victims of immigration policies that prevent them from receiving what they need in order to succeed. We believe that we are obligated to honor the principles upon which this nation was founded and must open our doors to immigrants who have enriched our society from the beginning.

✿ Each family, regardless of its nationality, must be treated by the government with respect, dignity, and recognition of the dreams that the family's entrance into the nation represent. We call for and speak out on behalf of undocumented families and ask that they be granted supports and equality as citizens and that they be recognized as family units that

Each family, regardless of its nationality, must be treated by the government with respect, dignity, and recognition of the dreams that the family's entrance into the nation represent.

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consist of more than individuals. Children must be the focus of policy, and policy therefore must not allow individual family members to be deported, leaving other family members vulnerable. We believe that we must move to more global approaches to life, work, immigration, and family support, and we cry out for:

a. Humane, compassionate, and enlightened approaches to dealing with undocumented families and their children
b. Understanding of the conditions that lead families to be undocumented

Concluding Remarks

✿ Our active gathering of parent leaders and government officials, anchored by powerful representation of both, was balanced geographically and demographically. It was the first in the Shared Leadership efforts of Family Support America. We were an extraordinarily diverse group of people who represented diverse political viewpoints. As a group, we were able to create strong and similar conclusions about the global needs of children, families, and, ultimately, all of us.

✿ We the participants consider the convergence of thought represented by the consensus statement to be a serious indication of growing commitment and intention to improve

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the lives of everyone in the nation by engaging all in participatory society. At its highest level, the consensus statement represents a demand for individual self-governance and participation in the life of the family, the community, the nation, and, ultimately, the world. It calls for all of us to step away from our own self-interests and to make the larger society a shared responsibility.

✿ This document honors both the giving and the receiving that are part of the life continuum which represents the human experience. It calls for us to reciprocally participate in, give to, and receive from a society that nourishes and strengthens us all. Its idealistic statements make a basic case: that investing in families honors the basic precepts of our nation and its reasons for being and ensures a future for generations to come.

Points of Tension

✿ There were many strong debates and charged conversations regarding statements that did not become part of the final consensus statement. Among those statements, individual assertions, and comments are:

a. While it may be true that collectively, citizens/parents should drive policy because they know what their families need, it is not true that all parents are equipped to define and drive policy. Parents differ widely in their political and child-rearing perspectives and world views. Some of those perspectives may be at odds with what family support believes to be correct.
b. Programs are a piece of the solution, but many are based on a deficit model. There was debate about reengineering the large, fragmented non-profit system of health and human services that consists of non-government organizations.
c. Regarding funding and financing, safeguards must be in place to ensure that funding reaches the families for which it is intended. It may not be true input from consumers of services and the agencies that deliver services is enough to guarantee that families will get what they need.
d. The current definition of parent leadership is a service-driven model that alienates many parents as well as policy makers. It also unintentionally segregates parents by class. Parent leadership is the capacity for parents to interact within civic society with purpose and positive outcomes for children. It has very little to do with whether one has services. That is consumer leadership, not parent leadership. Both are important, but they are quite different.
e. The family support movement overemphasizes social services and should evolve into (and may be evolving into) a hybrid of mutual assistance and community-based approaches.
f. Is it reasonable or realistic to make legislation and policy through a "committee of the whole"? Who determines what is the adequate "commentary"—public comment currently available for regulating and rule-making—and who has the responsibility to ensure that the public avails itself of that opportunity?
g. We need two strategies: one to build a parent movement and one to leverage that parent movement toward policy changes. The movement must be big enough and powerful enough to fend for itself and stand on its own.
h. We need to develop messages for policymakers that are tailored to their interests and language.
i. The current system does not allow for the building of trust between end-users and service deliverers. Often, people who need services do not believe that any system has their best interests at heart. They truly believe that systems can harm them.
j. Often, people with power and resources don't trust the people who need services and don't see those people's strengths as decision makers.
k. Racism and classism permeate all aspects of society and contribute to pervasive distrust.
l. There was not agreement about education and its availability in children's first language; there was significant tension surrounding use of English and other languages and the promotion of a multi-lingual society. Powerful voices promoted linguistic inclusiveness at all levels of service delivery.

Appendix 2

Issues and Ideas for Family Support Centers and Public and Private Funders*

Issue	Ideas for Centers	Ideas for Funders
Reducing the mismatch between the principles of family support and the current system of fragmented, categorical programs and funding.	• Establish a mission and workplan and match each element of the workplan to the most appropriate financing strategy. • Incorporate sustainability from the start. • Advocate for changes in existing systems.	• Move toward a family support orientation. • Make better use of existing funds through results-based decision making. • Increase the flexibility of existing systems. • Adopt a more comprehensive view of prevention. • Use community input in decision making.
Benefiting from the shift to results-based decision making.	• Measure and use results, when feasible. • Advocate for changes in existing systems.	• Make better use of existing funds through results-based decision making. • Increase the flexibility of existing systems.
Promoting collaboration and expanding the number and types of partners contributing to family support.	• Maximize the use of existing federal, state, and local funding streams. • Collaborate with others to ease competition and gain economies of scale. • Diversify funding. • Create public-private partnerships to broaden the base of support and leverage new resources. • Advocate for changes in existing financial systems. • Recruit new allies. • Position the center to serve new roles when new and appropriate funding streams become available. • Create administrative systems that enable the center to manage a large number of funding sources.	• Move toward a family support orientation. • Encourage more efficient operations through collaboration and networking. • Maximize available federal and state funding. • Increase the flexibility of existing systems. • Adopt a more comprehensive view of prevention. • Change administrative processes and rules that conflict with family support principles. • Use community input in decision making. • Consider new public and private revenue sources to support family support centers.

*From the Carnegie Corporation of New York and The Finance Project (2000) *Financing Family Resource Centers: A Guide to Sources and Strategies* (New York:) 39.

Appendix 3

Sample of Desired Legislative Outcome

An Act Creating Parent Trust Fund

The following bill was passed into law by the State of Connecticut General Assembly. Introduced by Rep. Christel H. Truglia in 2001, its central reference was the Consensus Document produced as a result of the Shared Leadership symposium convened by Family Support America in 2000.

Statement of Purpose

To create a public-private trust for quality community engagement and leadership activities with funds available for parent engagement to improve child outcomes in health, safety and learning. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

That the general statutes be amended to: (1) Create a public-private trust for quality community engagement and leadership activities with funds available, through a request-for-proposal process, between ten thousand and thirty thousand dollars per applicant site for parent engagement to improve child outcomes in health, safety or learning; (2) Require sites to show diversity among parent participants, quality training of civic skills and plans for increased, sustained parent engagement in the community; (3) Arrange for $250,000 to come from foundations with a state match of $200,000; (4) Require parent trust grants to be matched locally by fifty per cent, with twenty-five per cent in cash and 25% allowed to be in-kind; (5) Have the Governor's Prevention Partnership serve as the fiscal sponsor; and (6) Require the Department of Children and Families and the Commission on Children to oversee the planning and selection process for an oversight committee for the parent trust.

Appendix 4

Participant List

Shared Leadership: Forging a Consensus to Strengthen Families and Communities December 3–5, 2000

Mustafa Abdul-Salaam
Managing Director
Smith Whiley & Company
Hartford, CT

Ramona Adams
Parent Leader
The ARC Michigan
Lansing, MI

MaryLee Allen
Director, Child Welfare
& Mental Health
Children's Defense Fund
Washington, DC

Susan Ault
Executive Director
Children's Initiative of St.
Paul/Ramsey County
Walker, MN

Cynthia Barreto
Parent Leader
Spring Lake, NC

Scott A. Bates
Program Coordinator
Colorado Children's Trust Fund
Colorado Dept. of Public Health and
Environment
Denver, CO

Sandra Belalcazar
Home Visitor
Avance–Kansas City
Kansas City, KS

Sue M. Bell
Program Consultant
Resource Development Team
for Community-Based Programs
North Carolina Dept.
of Social Services
Raleigh, NC

David A. Berns
Director
El Paso County Dept.
of Human Services
Colorado Springs, CO

Janet E. Black
Administrator
Office of Women's Health
Nebraska Health and
Human Services System
Lincoln, NE

Pam Boyd
Parent Leader
St. Louis, MO

Vicki Carr
Parent Leader
Kalamazoo, MI

Art Carter
Parent Leader
Summerfield, NC

Migdalia Castro
Parents Across America
New Haven, CT

Isabel Chanslor
Parent Leader
St. Paul, MN

Ira Cohen
Director of Issues and
Communications
Congressman Danny K. Davis
Chicago, IL

George A. Coleman
Associate Commissioner Bureau
of Early Childhood Education
Connecticut Department
of Education
Middletown, CT

Jessie Coleman
Consultant
Mabelton, GA

Tammy Conrad
FAST Facilitator
FAST National Training
& Evaluation Center
Madison, WI

Barbara Cooper
State Representative
Tennessee General Assembly
Memphis, TN

James E. Cotter
Parent Leader
Co-Chair, SLCCP Steering Committee
St. Louis, MO

Jack Denniston
Project Manager, FRIENDS National
Resource Center CBFRS
Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Project
Chapel Hill, NC

Pat A. Fedricks
Parent Leader
St. Louis, MO

Melissa Galicia
Parent Participant
Heart of America Family Services
Dame La Mano Program
Leawood, KS

Marian Gamble
Interim Director
The Family Connection
Atlanta, GA

Preston Garrison
Executive Director
National Practitioners Network
for Fathers and Families
Washington, DC

Kim Giarratana
Chair, Board of Directors
Danbury Children First
Danbury, CT

Robert D. "Sandy" Goodlett
Executive Director
Family Resource and
outh Services Centers
Kentucky Cabinet for
Children and Families
Frankfort, KY

Anna Stanley Green
Director
Multicultural Community
Development
Family Resource Center
Spring Lake, NC

David Harris
Director of Florida Philanthropy
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur
Foundation
Palm Beach Gardens, FL

Elaine Harris-Fulton
Parent Leader
Pittsburgh, PA

Robert K. Hassin
Board of Directors
Family Support America
Chicago, IL

Steve Heasley
Financing & Program
Development Consultant
WV Governor's Cabinet
on Children & Families
Charleston, WV

Tricia L. Hellmer
Research Associate
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
Kansas City, MO

Robin Higa
Parent Leader
Thurston Community Health
and Safety Network
Olympia, WA

John Holton
Research Director
Prevent Child Abuse America
Chicago, IL

Irma Howard
Parent Paraprofessional
Family Service of Greater New Orleans
New Orleans, LA

Mary Howie Jennings
Principal
Hart Magnet School
Stamford, CT

Ronald B. Jimmerson, Sr.
Human Resources Manager
Cascade Engineering
Grand Rapids, MI

Lee Johnson
District Administrator
Florida Department of Children
and Families
Jacksonville, FL

Margarita Juarez
Parent Participant
Family Focus Center
Kansas City, MO

Judy Julian
Program Planner
Office of Juvenile Justice
& Delinquency Prevention
Raleigh, NC

Mary Alice Kannenberg
Parent Advocate
Pikes Peak Mental Health
Colorado Springs, CO

Louise M. Latimer, II
Executive Director
Urban League of Nebraska
Family Resource Center
Omaha, NE

Kao Lee
Parent Leader
St. Paul, MN

Lisa Lee
Program Director
Parent Services Project, Inc.
San Rafael, CA

Debra Lewis-Curlee
Fellow
Federation for Community Planning
Cleveland, OH

Frances Litman
Board of Directors
Massachusetts Children's
Trust Fund
Newton, MA

Laura L. Loyacono
Manager, Public Affairs
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
Kansas City, MO

Hilda Magaña
Director
José Martí Child
Development Center
Seattle, WA

Melanie Martin
Program Consultant
Friends of the Family
Baltimore, MD

Virginia A. Martinez
Program Director
Colorado Family
Resource Network
Denver, CO

Espanola Masterson
Parent Participant
Family Resource Center
Kansas City, MO

Michelle McDonald
Parent Leader
Hartford Childhood
Immunization Project
Hartford, CT

Theresa Melanson
Parent Leader
Valuing Our Children
Athol, MA

Bill Michaels
Executive Director
Family Resource Center
Association of Colorado
Denver, CO

Brad Miller
State Senator
North Carolina General
Assembly
Raleigh, NC

John Monahan
Senior Consultant
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Baltimore, MD

Quincey Morris
Parent Leader
Memphis, TN

Robert Morris
Parent Leader
Fayetteville, NC

Catherine H. Myers
Publications Director
Mothers At Home
Fairfax, VA

Gary M. Nelson
Associate Director
Jordan Institute for Families
University of North Carolina
School of Social Work
Chapel Hill, NC

Sheila Nicholson
Senior Program Officer
PACT Community Development
Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies

Ann Oluremi Oliver
Day Care Plus Consultant
Positive Education Program
Cleveland, OH

Bob Over
Executive Director
Mountain Resource Center
Conifer, CO

Lyris R. Crowdy Peak
Executive Director
Family Resource Center
Coalition of Nebraska
Omaha, NE

Adriana M. Pecina
Senior Program Officer
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
Kansas City, MO

Laura Porter
Staff Director
Washington State Family
Policy Council
Olympia, WA

Rhonda Present
Parent Leader
Evanston, IL

Lisa Reynolds
Parents Across America
Norwich, CT

Thomas Reynolds
Parents Across America
Norwich, CT

Maria Rico
Parent Leader
Seattle, WA

Kelly Stockman Reid
Resource and Training Manager
Washington Council for the
Prevention of Child Abuse
and Neglect
Seattle, WA

Charles Ridley
CEO, MAD DADS
Delray Beach, FL

Letty Rivera
Parent Leader, FAST
San Antonio, TX

Sylvia L. Robinson
Vice President, Youth Development
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
Kansas City, MO

Amelia Rose
Community Facilitator
Children's Services Council
West Palm Beach, FL

Constance L. Ross
Managing Attorney
University of Memphis
Litigation Clinic
Memphis, TN

Curtis Royston
Chairman, Advisory Board
Walbridge Community
Education Center
St. Louis, MO

Minalee Saks
Executive Director
Birth To Three
Eugene, OR

Stephennie Segrest-Stuckey
Vice Chair
Illinois Family Partnership Network
Calumet Park, IL

Jesus Ruben Segura
Mayor
City of Sunland Park
Sunland Park, NM

Carmen Siberon
Grants Coordinator
Graustein Memorial Fund
New Haven, CT

Bobbi J. Smith
Parent Leader
Birth To Three
Springfield, OR

Joan Stiles
Family Policy Analyst
Massachusetts Dept.
of Social Services
Boston, MA

Cindy Stovall
Coordinator of Family Resources
Springfield Family Support Programs
Springfield, MA

Sharon Taba
Project Director, Malama Pono
Hawaii Medical Association
Honolulu, HI

Bobbie R. Thompson
Executive Administrative Assistant
Tennessee Dept. of Human Services
Memphis, TN

Sonya Toman
Team Leader
Resource Development Team
for Community-Based Programs
North Carolina Division
of Social Services
Raleigh, NC

Lilya Valladolid
Executive Assistant
Family Support California
Oakland, CA

Khatib A. F. Waheed
Special Assistant to the Director
Missouri Department of
Social Services
St. Louis, MO

Al Walker
Executive Director
Jacksonville Community Partnership
for Protecting Children
Jacksonville, FL

Virginia Walker
Diversity Coordinator
The Family Connection
Athens, GA

Emerson Waters
Parent Leader
Fayetteville, NC

Jill O. Weise
Program Consultant
Minnesota Department
of Human Services
Division of Children's Mental Health
St. Paul, MN

Sharon Williams
Director, Parent Leadership Initiative
Connecticut Commission
on Children
Hartford, CT

Ruth A. Wooden
President
National Parenting Association
New York, NY

Lia Vang
Parent Leader
St. Paul, MN

Elaine Zimmerman
Executive Director
Connecticut Commission
on Children
Hartford, CT

Claudia Zundel
Cross Systems Project Manager
Colorado Department of
Human Services
Children's Health &
Rehabilitation Division
Denver, CO

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